

DC

UNIVERSE

1

RATED T+ TEEN PLUS
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6-ISSUE
MINI-
SERIES

THE BATMAN

WHO LAUGHS

FROM THE PAGES OF
DARK NIGHTS
METAL

MISS
ME?

SNYDER
JOCK
BARON



Brian Michael Bendis
Patrick Gleason

Brian Michael Bendis
David Walker • Jamal Campbell

Mark Russell • Stephen Byrne

Sam Humphries
Joe Quiñones





Capullo
J. Fco

THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS 1 SNYDER • JOCK • BARON

RATED T+ TEEN PLUS
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What is your
happiest
memory?

Mine is
my First.

I am four years old and
running toward the manor.
It's a warm summer evening
and past my bedtime.

My parents and Alfred
stand between me and
the house with their
hands clasped. We're
playing a game.

The object is for
me to try to break
through their arms
and make it inside.

So I run and
I throw myself
against their
arms as hard
as I can...but
every time they
stop me.

They keep me
there with them,
so we can all play
a little longer.

So I won't
find myself
on the other
side in a dark,
empty house,
all alone.

I still
remember
the smell
of the cut
grass. The
bright red
sun, like a
bloodshot
eye peeking
through the
bars of the
trees.

What I
remember most
is the strength
of their arms
holding me
back...

...and above all,
the laughter.
All of us laughing
like lunatics as
the sky darkened
behind the house.

GOTHAM! NOW!

RUUUMMMBLE

ALFRED,
STATUS!







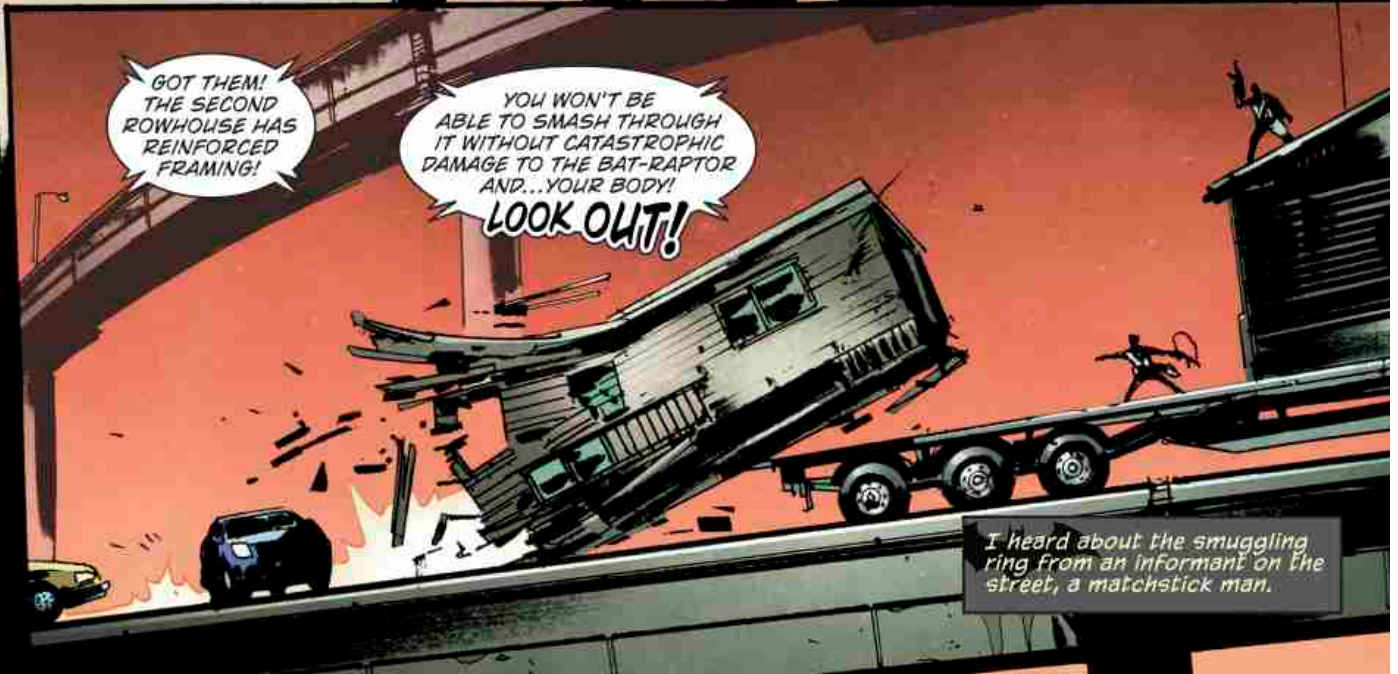
...ALFRED,
LOOK UP THE
SCHEMATIC ON
THE LAST TWO
HOUSES. MAKE
SURE THEY'RE
PENETRABLE.

I MUST SAY,
GOTHAM BANKS MIGHT
CONSIDER OFFERING
BATMAN INSURANCE
POLICIES.

THEY
DO. LOOK
IT UP.

SIR, I'M
NOT LOOKING
UP A JOKE,
WHEN--

NO,
LOOK UP THE
SCHEMATIC
ON THE DAMN
ROWHOUSES!
NOW.



GOT THEM!
THE SECOND
ROWHOUSE HAS
REINFORCED
FRAMING!

YOU WON'T BE
ABLE TO SMASH THROUGH
IT WITHOUT CATASTROPHIC
DAMAGE TO THE BAT-RAPTOR
AND...YOUR BODY!
LOOK OUT!

I heard about the smuggling
ring from an informant on the
street, a matchstick man.



They use extreme-load trucks to carry contraband from Gotham to the outside world.

Trucks like these have pockets within the flatbeds for compression, so they can carry things up to three, four tons--like historical rowhouses removed to make room for new condos.



The company is called Happy Trails.

TIK

Word on the street is that they've been smuggling bodies out of Gotham that came into the morgue unidentified, headed for the potter's field.



These are the bodies of people who lived and died here, in this city, in Gotham. People we failed to protect in life...

...but these thieves think they can take them over that bridge? Out of Gotham to be hacked up?



The thought makes me angrier than I expect.

KACHING





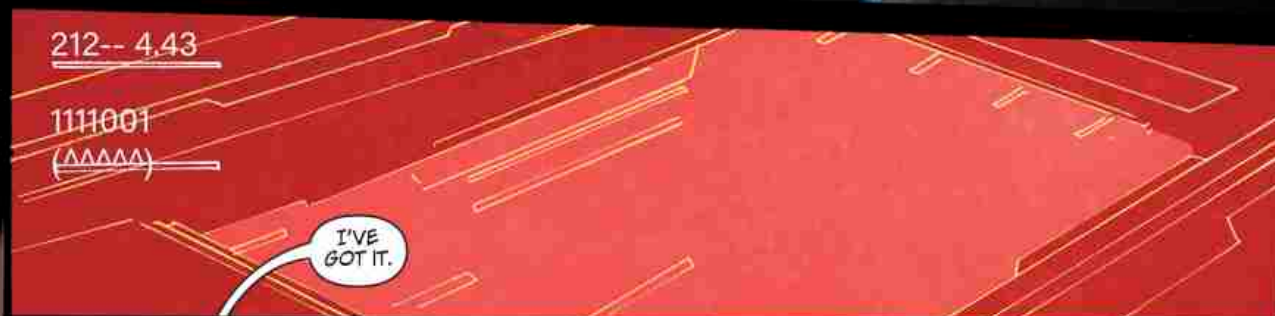
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, BATMAN INSURANCE POLICIES ARE CALLED **DARK KNIGHT RETURNS**.

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD LOOK INTO ONE.



SCANNING THE FLATBED...

...THERE.



212-- 4.43

1111001

(AAAAA)

I'VE GOT IT.



SECURING BAT-CHARGE.

Gotham's potter's field was established in the city's early days by its most prominent citizens--members of the Five Families.

CLICK
CLICK



The chosen spot was one of the prettiest at that time, a field that slopes down to the bay.

DETONATING.

POOOOM



There was confusion over why the city should put a gravesite for anonymous citizens on such a prime piece of land, but the thinking was...



...whatever troubles someone faced in life here in this city...

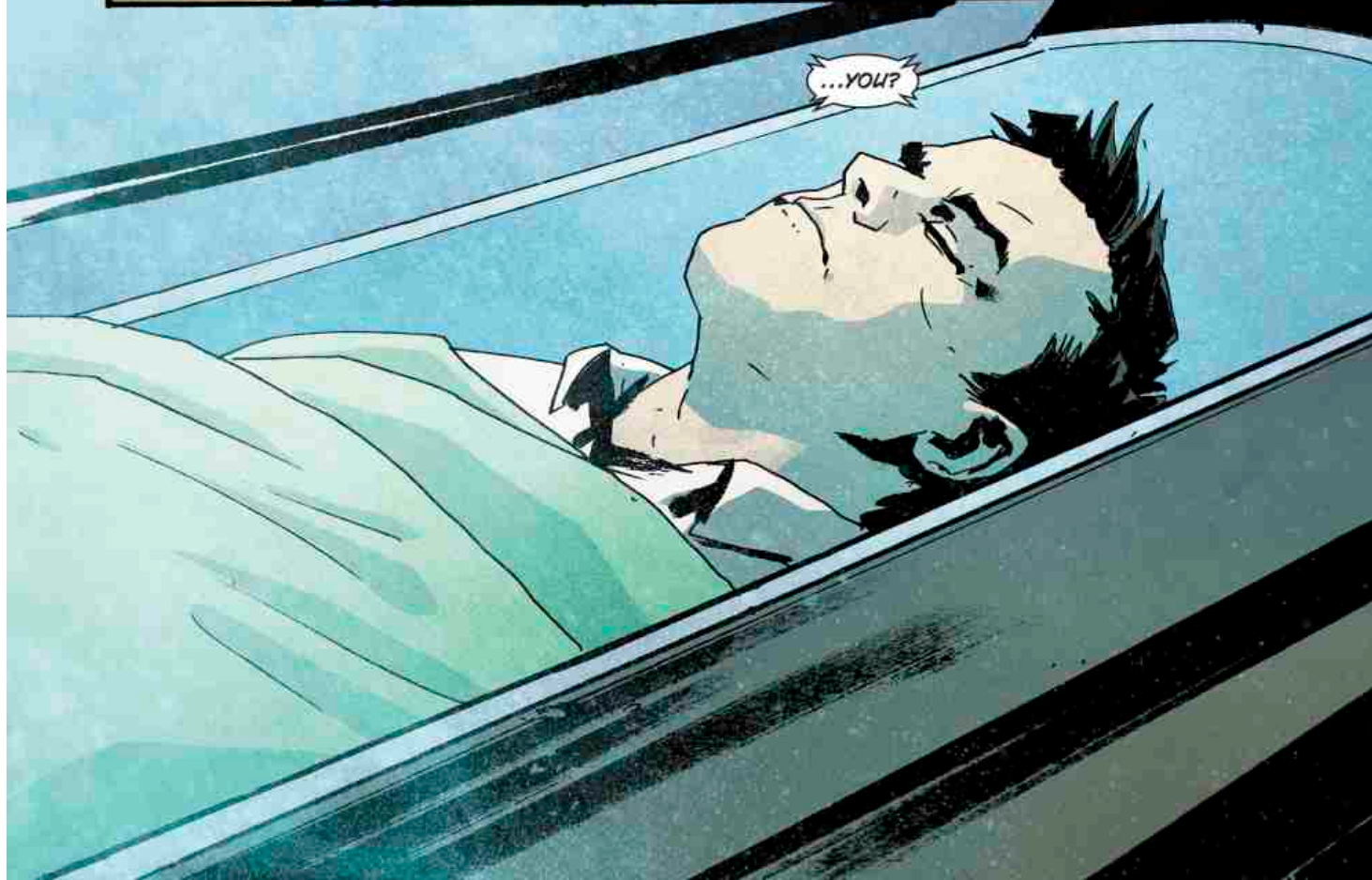


...let them at least rest in peace on our shores.

ALL RIGHT.
LET'S SEE WHO
YOU...WHAT IN--

MY
GOD...SIR,
IS THAT...

...YOU?



GOTHAM MORGUE.

DECEASED IS
BRUCE WAYNE.

AGE,
ROUGHLY 42,
MAYBE 43.
CAUSE OF
DEATH,
UNKNOWN.

SUBJECT
APPEARS TO HAVE
BEEN IN GOOD PHYSICAL
HEALTH. NO WOUNDS, NO
INTERNAL INJURIES
APPARENT.

ARE YOU
HEARING
ME?

HEY.
ALFRED?

I'M SORRY,
SIR. BUT IF I
MAY, IT'S HARD TO
BE AS CLINICAL
AS YOU THIS
TIME.

THE DNA
MATCHES MINE, BUT
IT COULD BE SOME
TRICK, SOME--

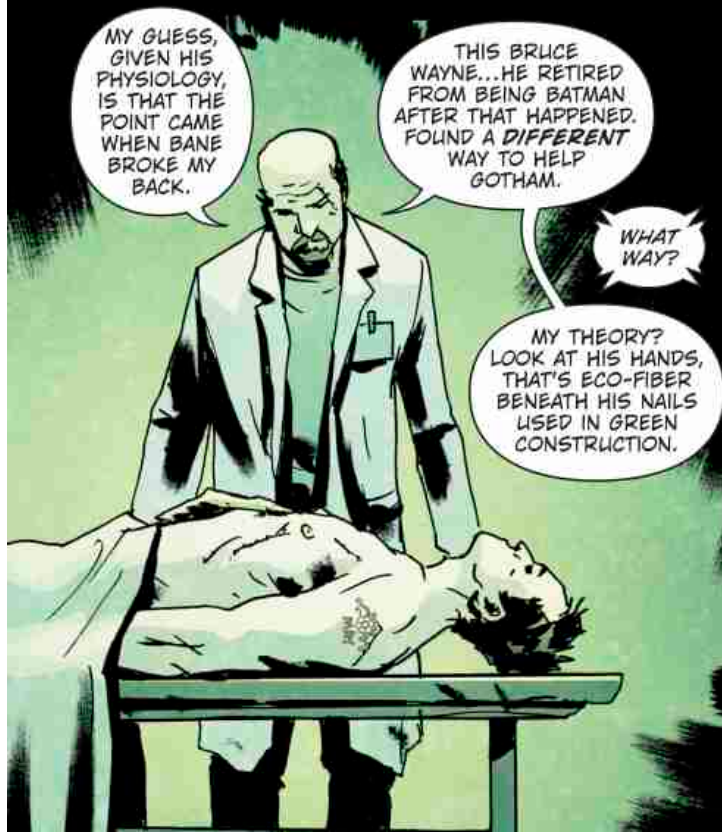
I KNOW YOU. I
RAISED YOU, AND
THAT IS YOU ON THE
TABLE. SOME OLDER
VERSION OF YOU.
IT'S JUST
TOO--

LOOK, IT'S
UNNERVING FOR
ME, TOO. BUT IT'S
STILL A CASE. NOW I HAVE
EYES ON ME, AND THE
REAL DOCTOR VETH IS
GOING TO WAKE UP
ANY MINUTE.

ARE YOU
HEARING
ME?

I'M... I'M
SORRY. I'M
HERE. I'LL
HELP.

NO
INTERNAL
INJURIES.
YOU WERE
SAYING?





ARKHAM ASYLUM.



SO SHE TELLS
ME THE POLICY
IS CALLED...

BOB,
LOOK!



BATMAN?!

WE JUST
REDID THE DAMN
TRIGGERS. HOW THE
HELL DID YOU
GET IN?

MAN, I
HAVE TO
SAY, IT'S AN
HONOR
TO--

ZZZZT

AAAGH!





VASQUEZ?
KIVIAT?! WHAT
THE...

FREEZE RIGHT
THERE, #5%?! OR
YOU GO DOWN
FAST!

HOLY...IT'S
BATMAN! ARE
THOSE GUNS?!
BUT BATMAN
DOESN'T
USE...



...GUNS--

HE
DOES
NOW.

GULK-

CHIK
CHIK

POON

NO,
DON'T--

SHULK

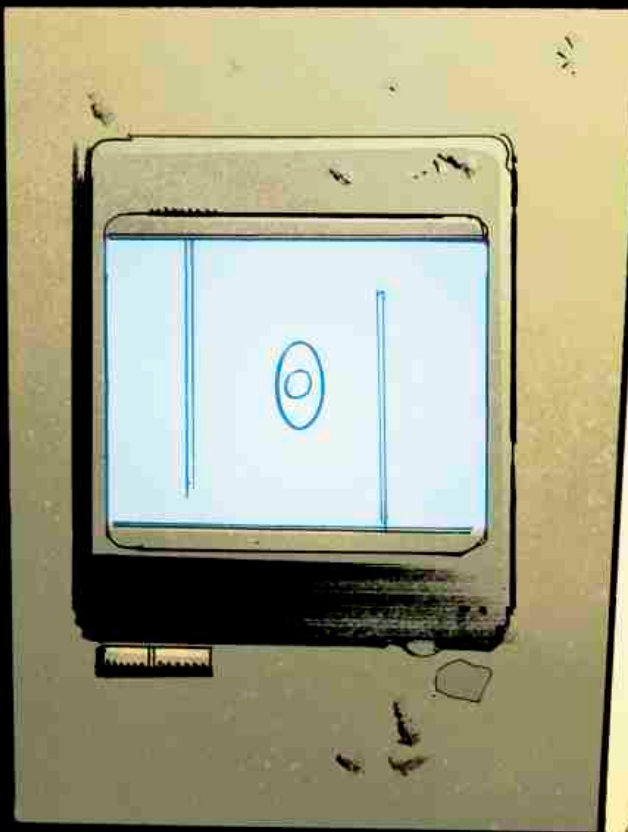
POK

WHUMP

BATMAN,
WE ARE FOES,
BUT THIS...THIS
ISN'T YOU!

PLEASE!
THE DOCTORS HERE,
WHEN I LOSE CONTROL
THEY SAY THE BEST
THING IS TO
PICTURE--

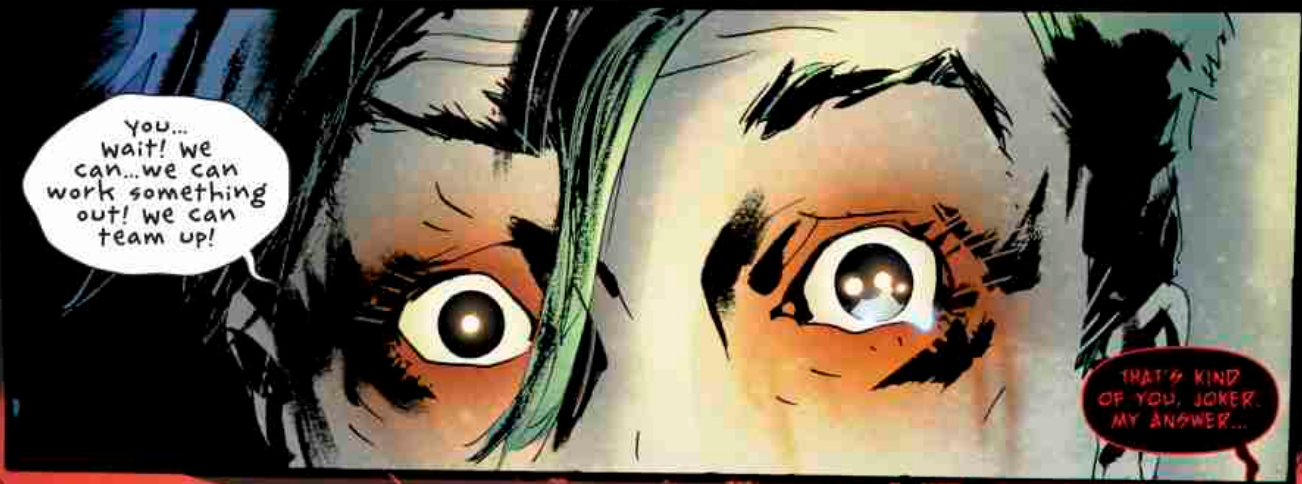








BUT
I AM.



you...
wait! we
can...we can
work something
out! we can
team up!

THAT'S KIND
OF YOU, JOKER.
MY ANSWER...



SHLINK



...IS
HA.

GCPD HQ.

DEEP DOWN, THEY KNOW IT WASN'T YOU...BUT STILL, THEY'RE SCARED. SO I'M KEEPING THE SIGNAL LIGHT OFF.

I UNDERSTAND.

SO THIS...THING. WHAT IS IT?

HE COMES FROM A REALM WHERE ALL OUR HOPES AND FEARS EXIST IN MATERIAL FORM.

I'VE HAD MOMENTS WHEN I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT KILLING THE JOKER, JIM.

BUT IT'S MY BELIEF THAT THE JOKER'S HEART CONTAINS A SINGULAR SUPER-TOXIN THAT'LL BE RELEASED WHEN HE DIES. A TOXIN THAT WILL MAKE WHOEVER KILLS HIM THE NEXT JOKER. SO THIS CREATURE, HE'S ME, BUT A ME WHO'S--

ALSO HIM. LORD...

WELL FIRST, WHO HASN'T THOUGHT ABOUT KILLING JOKER? THE CITY'LL BE HEARTBROKEN TO KNOW IT WAS A DECOY IN THAT CELL. HOWEVER THE HELL JOKER MANAGED IT, I DON'T KNOW. BUT IF THIS "BATMAN WHO LAUGHS" GUY IS THE JOKER IN YOUR BODY, WE CAN STILL--

HE'S NOT THE JOKER, JIM. HE'S BATMAN. HE'S ME. JOKER HAS POINTS TO PROVE--TO ME, TO THE WORLD.

THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS...HE'S NOT HERE TO PROVE ANYTHING. HE'S HERE TO WIN, TO KILL ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT'S A THREAT.

BUT WHEN YOU SAY HE'S YOU, HOW MUCH OF YOUR LIFE--

ALL OF IT. HE'S LED MY LIFE, HAS MY TRAINING, HAS MY MEMORIES, MY MIND...BUT HE'S ME FREE FROM CODES, MORALS, HEART BLACK AS THE JOKER'S.

HE'S THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF THE IDEA THAT--

"BATMAN ALWAYS WINS." MY GOD.



HE'S AN
APEX PREDATOR, JIM.
HE CONQUERED AND KILLED
WORLD AFTER WORLD IN HIS DIMENSION.
AND HE'S HERE FOR SOMETHING. THIS
OTHER BATMAN HE BROUGHT WHO
KILLED EVERYONE AT ARKHAM AND
NEARLY KILLED FREEZE...THE
ONE THEY'RE CALLING
"THE GRIM KNIGHT"...

...THE BATMAN
WHO LAUGHS MUST HAVE
BROUGHT HIM OVER BEFORE
OUR LAST BATTLE. KEPT HIM
HIDDEN, WAITING UNTIL NOW. BUT
WHY? AND WHAT ABOUT THIS
DEAD BRUCE WAYNE IN
THE MORGUE?

HE HAS
A PLAN...
I...I JUST
CAN'T SEE
IT YET,
DAMMIT.



I NEED...
HELP.

At the time of the attack, the
Joker had only been in Arkham a
short while. The decoy in his cell
must have been swapped in only
days ago. As though the Joker
knew what was coming for him...

...the name of the man
impersonating him was
changed multiple times to
hide his identity. One of
Joker's Slapsick Men.

Each name change has
significance. Glucks.
Sonasa. Lykken. Gladjeg.
The names are all from
words that mean
"happiness" in other
languages, but each has
one added letter.

Put together, the letters
spell "Sang"--an old
Gotham comedy club
expression. If you sang,
you had the best set of
your career. The fat lady
sang. You could die now.

So what would have
been, or would be, the
happiest moment in
Joker's life? Where
would it take place?
Where am I supposed
to meet him?

And then it
hits me...

...I already know. I've known all along.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, SIR. WHY WOULD WE UNDO THE WATERWAY SECURITY SYSTEMS? THE ROCKS WILL SHIFT, THE TUNNELS WILL OPEN.

ALFRED, DO IT.

ANYONE TRAVELING THOSE WATERWAYS WILL BE ABLE TO COME RIGHT INTO--

I SAID DO IT!

IT'S ALREADY DONE, I JUST...

...MY GOD...

...WAS SOMEONE ALREADY LURKING DOWN THERE, WAITING?

NO, NO, NO. TELL ME IT'S NOT HIM, SIR. WHO IS IT?

WHO'S THERE?

Now, now, Jeevessss...





...and
you don't
either!



WHAT ARE YOU
DOING?! JOKER, WE
NEED TO WORK
TOGET--



A TRICK
GUN...?

ALFRED,
HE'S GOING!
HIS HEART...
THE BLOOD,
ARTERIAL...

JOKER!
JOKER STAY
WITH ME!
WHY...WHY
DID YOU DO
THAT?!

BECAUSSE...

The only way
you'll beat him...
is to become
him. Heh.

...
MY GOD...
YOUR HEART.
THE TOXIN...
WHAT HAVE
YOU DONE?!

NO...
NO!

HE'S...
HE'S REALLY
GONE, SIR.

WHY ARE YOU
SMILING LIKE
THAT?

WHAT'S
WRONG?!

In a second
Alfred rushes
to me.

And just like in that
first memory, I feel
the warmth of his
hands, the strength as
they hold me back...

...he's calling
to me. But all
I can hear...

Heeee

...is laughter.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS

THE LAUGHING HOUSE PART 1

SCOTT SNYDER Writer JOCK Artist
DAVID BARON Colors SAL CIPRIANO Letters
JOCK Cover GREG CAPULLO & FCO PLASCENCIA Variant Cover
DAVE WIELGOSZ Asst. Editor KATIE KUBERT Editor
JAMIE S. RICH Group Editor
BATMAN Created by BOB KANE with BILL FINGER

BETWEEN THE PANELS: **PETER J. TOMASI**



The DETECTIVE COMICS writer details his plans for the Dark Knight as he reunites with artist Doug Mahnke and builds toward the landmark issue #1000

DC Nation: You've been involved with Batman on some level as an editor and writer for almost two decades. What is it about this character and his world that keeps you coming back with more to say each time?

Hands down, Batman's my favorite character. He was the first to be burned into my comics-reading DNA during my all-important formative years by writers like Bill Finger, Gardner Fox, Denny O'Neil, Steve Englehart, Len Wein, Gerry Conway, Doug Moench, Mike W. Barr and the great Frank Miller, whose BATMAN: YEAR ONE is still a story I read once a year to remind myself how to tell a lean and mean Batman tale. What I love about being involved with Batman, be it when I was an editor or now as a writer, is that he transcends all genres. You can put Batman anywhere and he works.

The first scene in your initial arc of DETECTIVE COMICS involves the bodies of Bruce Wayne's parents reappearing in an unexpected way. What can you tell us about this shocker and how it affects Batman?

That opening scene lights the fuse of a big mystery. I love to pull the layers back on Batman as to what makes him tick. The yellow sticky note on my computer this time around says: to wear the cape and cowl sometimes you have to wage war on yourself. I always like to keep the main idea in front of my eyes when writing; it keeps me focused and always steers me back toward the central idea if I find myself getting off track.

Who's your personal favorite of Batman's extensive rogues gallery?

I loved writing the Joker and Two-Face during my Batman and Robin run. Those "Death of the Family" issues were a blast, and Patrick Gleason scared the crap outta me with his renditions of the Clown Prince of Crime and Two-Face in our "Big Burn" story line. Not only do I want to play with the classic baddies, I also want to crash a few new rogues into Batman's gallery along the way and see what has staying power.

You've collaborated with artist Doug Mahnke in the past, but this is the first time you've booked a trip together to Gotham. What are Doug's greatest strengths and how have your past partnerships prepared you for this project?

Doug's greatest strength as an artist is exactly what makes an amazing comic book: he's a natural born storyteller. What I like best about Doug's work is that he's a perfect fit for the way I approach my own storytelling: character comes first. Doug can deliver on the smallest dramatic moment or a massive epic battle without missing a beat. ■



PETER J. TOMASI
AND DOUG MAHNKE ON
**DETECTIVE
COMICS #994**
ON SALE NOW!



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The Last Kryptonian-DCP

